

**VEHICLE AIR BAG MINIMUM DISTANCE
ENFORCEMENT APPARATUS, METHOD AND SYSTEM**

RELATED APPLICATION INFORMATION

This application is a continuation of and claims the benefit of and priority to U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/897,536, which is a continuation of and claims the benefit of and priority to U.S. Patent Application No. 09/220,832, filed December 24, 1998, which issued as U.S. Patent No. 6,293,584 on September 25, 2001 and which claims the benefit of and priority to U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/101,487, filed September 23, 1998; U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/105,245, filed October 22, 1998; and U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/105,595, filed October 26, 1998.

10 **FIELD OF THE INVENTION**

The present invention relates to safety systems and methods for vehicles and more particularly relates to vehicle air-bag systems which, in operation, take into account a clearance between a vehicle passenger and an air-bag.

15 **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Although statistics may indicate that vehicles equipped with air-bags have enhanced passenger safety, under certain conditions air-bags may have been identified as a source of passenger injuries and may have even been cited in some cases as causing death. As understood, deaths may have been attributed to air-bags predominantly in low-speed accidents, and air-bags may have also been a factor in deaths resulting from high-speed accidents.

A number of these injuries may have involved shorter drivers (more specifically, drivers 5' 0" or less in height) who adjust the seat position so that a distance between the air-bag and the driver are reduced below a safe clearance. Drivers taller than 5'0" may also position themselves within the minimum safe clearance and this positioning is dangerous regardless of the height of the driver. In certain systems, as all of the adjustment for drivers of various sizes is generally done through seat movement, shorter drivers may be positioned much closer to the steering wheel (and the air-bag contained therein) than are taller drivers.